

Alpine Procession -- the Crowning Point of
the Summer Season
by Juerg Mosimann

For Example, the State Agricultural School Schwand, Muensingen

When the days become shorter and the shadows longer, the time nears for the dairy herdsmen to prepare for their departure from the alps. At least that is how it was yesterday, Tuesday, for the natives of the alps and the dairymen of the State Agricultural School Schwand in Muensingen. After having spent nearly three months on the Hinterfildrich Alp high above the Diemtig Canyon they moved to the valley with most of their cattle.

Fourteen days later than other years the procession, headed by a dairyman and three young helpers from the Cantonal Agricultural School at Schwand, wended its way on June 17th to the recently remodeled dairy on the Interfildrich Alp in the Kiley region. "This year we had about 160 head of cattle for the summer on the alp," said Hansruedi Bigler, mayor of Muensingen and manager of the Agricultural School at Schwand, to the "Bernese Nachrichten." The three young helpers who accompanied the dairyman to the alp and loyally assisted him were natives of Niedermuhlern, Wattenwil and Zurich. For the young student of cultural engineering from the City on the Limmat, the summer experience on the alp was probably an unforgettable one. During the approximate three months on the alp they produced nothing less than 3800 kilograms of delicious mountain cheese and about 400 kilograms of butter. "Both the butter and the cheese, for the most part, will be sold at the cheese-dairy in Muensingen," said Hansruedi Bigler.

4 Hour March

Yesterday, Tuesday, the summer season on the alp came to an end for the dairymen and cattle on the Hinterfildrich Alp. After the cows had been milked and cleaned, the long procession down the canyon started at 7:15 a.m. With their ringing bells and heads decorated with flowers, the animals called attention to themselves throughout the four hour march down the canyon. The admiration that the procession causes each year as it comes down from the alp could be seen in the number of people who gathered in Oey in Diemtig Canyon to witness it.

Even from America

"Armed" with cameras, local residents and tourists lined the streets. No one wanted to miss the almost unique spectacle. Among the fence-side guests were also 35 tourists from the USA. However they have a special relationship to the Diemtig Canyon. About the year 1860 a certain Johannes Kunz-Knutti from Zwischenflueh immigrated to the States and founded the village of Bern in the state of Idaho. Therefore these tourists were by no means normal tourists, but were all descendants of Johannes Kunz-Knutti ! They were not at all bashful to make the long trip from the USA in order to experience the alpine procession "live." The ringing procession finally ended after the cattle arrived at the train station in Muensingen and marched in a small parade through that Aare Valley community.

Caption under the accompanying photograph:

The colorful alpine procession (here in Oey) caught the eyes of many observers on the streets.